

Adjectives

Ref Hsk3 Grammar

形容词 + 极了——“to the max” (极了)

When something is **off the charts** —the best, the worst, the most you’ve ever seen — tack **极了** (jíle) onto the adjective. 极 means “**the furthest point, the extreme**” (it’s the 极 of 北极, the North *Pole*), so 好极了 reads literally as “*good —all the way to the pole.*” It works for praise and complaints alike, and it lives in casual, spoken Chinese.

Unusually for a degree phrase, 极了 clamps **straight onto the adjective with no 得** —and the 了 is **welded on**: drop it and the sentence is simply wrong.

Structure: Subject + Adjective + 极了 *Literally:* “[subject is] adjective —to the extreme.”

{zh: 这个 |zhè ge|this / 主意 |zhǔ yi|idea / 好 |hǎo|good / 极了 |jí le|extremely / 。 }

This idea is perfect.

{zh: 高考 |gāo kǎo|the college exam / 那天 |nà tiān|that day / , 我 |wǒ|I / 紧张 |jǐn zhāng|nervous / 极了 |jí le|extremely / 。 }

I was incredibly nervous on the day of the gaokao.

{zh: 那个 |nà ge|that / 男孩 |nán hái|boy / 讨厌 |tǎo yàn|annoying / 极了 |jí le|extremely / ! }

That boy is unbelievably annoying!

Remember: 极 = **pole, the furthest point** (北极 = North Pole). 好极了 pushes “good” all the way to the pole —and 极 never travels without its 了.

Watch out

- The 了 is **non-negotiable**: 好极了 , never 好极.
- **No 得**—it attaches bare (好极了), unlike most degree complements (好得很).
- 极了 already carries the emphasis, so don’t pile on 很 or 非常: 好极了, never 很好极了.

形容词重叠—doubling adjectives for warmth (AA / AABB)

Repeat an adjective and it turns **soft, warm, and vivid** —less a cold fact, more a fond little picture. This doubling runs all through friendly, natural Chinese, especially for **physical descriptions**: colours, sizes, shapes.

A **one-syllable** adjective doubles as **AA**, usually with 的 before the noun —大 (“big”) → 大大的 (“nice and big, big and round”):

Structure: A + A + 的 (+ Noun)

{zh: 宝宝 |bǎo bao|the baby / 的 |de / 眼睛 |yǎn jīng|eyes / 大大的 |dà dà de|big and round / 。 }

The baby has big, round eyes.

{zh: 今晚 |jīn wǎn|tonight / 的 |de / 月亮 |yuè liàng|moon / 圆圆的 |yuán yuán de|nice and round / 。 }

The moon is lovely and round tonight.

A **two-syllable** adjective doubles as **AABB** —repeat each character, not the whole word: 高兴 → 高高兴兴, 干净 → 干干净净, 舒服 → 舒舒服服. Used as an **adverb**, the AABB form takes 地 before the verb:

{zh: 我 |wǒ|I / 想 |xiǎng|want to / 舒舒服服 |shū shū fú fú|comfortably / 地 |de / 躺 |tǎng|lie / 在 |zài|on / 沙发上 |shā fā shàng|the sofa / 。 }

I just want to lie comfortably on the sofa.

Remember: doubling **softens and warms** —大大的眼睛 isn't a flat "big eyes," it's the affectionate "lovely big eyes" a parent would coo. AA + 的 paints a noun; AABB + 地 colours a verb.

Watch out

- **Not every adjective doubles** —好吃, 便宜, 麻烦 are never said as 好好吃吃 / 便便宜宜. Stick to common physical descriptors until you've heard a form used for real.
- A doubled adjective is **already emphatic** —never put 很 in front (很慢慢 is wrong).

形容词 + 地 + 动词—turning an adjective into "-ly" (地)

To say **how** an action is done, park the particle 地 (de) after an adjective —it is Chinese's "-ly." 高兴 ("happy") → 高兴地 ("happily"); 认真 ("careful") → 认真地 ("carefully"). The adverb always sits **in front of** the verb.

Structure: Adjective + 地 + Verb *Literally: "happy-ly —smiled."*

{zh: 他 |tā|he / 高兴 |gāo xìng|happy / 地 |de / 笑 |xiào|smiled / 了 |le / 。 }

He smiled happily.

{zh: 老师 |lǎo shī|the teacher / 认真 |rèn zhēn|careful / 地 |de / 看 |kàn|read / 了 |le / 我的 |wǒ de|my / 作文 |zuò wén|essay / 。 }

The teacher read my essay carefully.

Remember: 地 = "-ly". Three de's sound identical but split the work: 的 owns a noun (我的书), 地 drives a verb (慢慢地走), 得 rates the result (跑得快). The 地 here even carries 土 "earth" on its left —picture an adverb *grounding* how the verb is done.

Watch out

- This 地 is read **de**, not *dì* —same sound as 的 and 得, different job.
- The adverb phrase comes **before** the verb, never after it.